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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 RABAT 000753

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IO/PSC, PM, NEA/RA, AND NEA/MAG

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TAGS: MOPS PREL MCAP KPKO KUNR MO

SUBJECT: MOROCCO: FLOATING NEW PEACEKEEPING INITIATIVES

REF: A. IRR 7 100 0391 08 (NOTAL)

1B. 07 RABAT 00343

1C. RABAT 01238

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas T. Riley for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: The Government of Morocco (GOM) is exploring the possibility of increasing its peacekeeping profile by creating a UN-sponsored regional training center and/or augmenting its own ability to carry out peacekeeping operations. It is soliciting preliminary international reaction to both. Even with this support, the GOM would face other challenges to these initiatives, such as resource constraints and a lack of "buy-in" from its own military leaders. In addition to the advantages of possibly receiving material and training for its armed forces, Morocco likely calculates these initiatives, if they came to fruition, could garner good will with other countries through peacekeeping training and contributions, which the GOM could then parlay toward meeting its goals on the Western Sahara issue. Despite these initiatives, the GOM is unwilling to commit peacekeepers for Sudan at this time. Although Morocco's vision for these initiatives is purely in the idea stage, the GOM has opened a dialogue with at least the U.S. and Canada to solicit ideas and gauge our support. End summary.

Morocco: Exploring Higher Profile Role in Peacekeeping

12. (C) On August 7, A/PolCouns met with Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Chief of Staff Nasser Bourita to discuss the possibility of the Government of Morocco (GOM) establishing a UN-endorsed regional training center for peacekeeping in Morocco, and other ideas for increasing Morocco's peacekeeping profile. The purpose of the meeting with Bourita was to follow-up on a series of meetings in mid-July between A/PolCouns and MFA Office of United Nations Affairs Counselor Amine Chabi to engage the MFA at a higher level and to seek clarification of MFA's ideas. The GOM is in the process of "preparing the terrain" diplomatically to see if countries like the U.S. and Canada would support the idea before moving any further.

13. (C) Although still in the idea stage, the MFA solicited the U.S.'s opinion of the GOM creating a Morocco-based UN facility that would specialize in the training of soldiers, officers, and diplomats from Francophone Africa and the Middle East to increase their effectiveness in peacekeeping

deployments world wide. Bourita underscored the GOM's robust experience in peacekeeping operations, dating back to the 1960s, including past deployments to Angola, Bosnia, Cambodia, Haiti, and Somalia, and current peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire (1,500 security personnel) and Kosovo, i.e., a fully staffed military hospital. He also cited Morocco's experience in "new areas of peacekeeping," such as post-conflict reconciliation as a basis of Morocco's peacekeeping credentials. In addition to its experiences in Bosnia and Kosovo, the GOM had grown from its own "reconciliation experience" -- after Morocco's infamous "years of lead." In addition to raising its standard of human rights protections, Morocco has gained valuable experience in striking a balance between providing justice to a post conflict society without causing a break in that society or destabilizing the country, Bourita explained. He expressed his belief that a demand exists for this kind of training among countries in West African and the Middle East.

In addition to the U.S., Bourita said that the GOM had opened a dialogue with the Government of Canada, through its Pearson Peacekeeping Center, to add to Morocco's reflection on the training center idea.

¶4. (C) Morocco's training center concept is the latest indicator of Morocco's desire to explore ideas that may increase its peacekeeping profile. In April, Morocco tabled with the U.S., through UN channels, a proposal to commemorate the 60th anniversary of UN peacekeeping by sponsoring a high-level meeting at the next UNGA to discuss lessons learned from past UN deployments and prospects for future

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ones. Bourita said that Morocco would like to see greater codification in the UN of peacekeeping to "bring it in line with modern times." Bourita underscored that despite peacekeeping being around for over half a century, it has yet to be codified in serious way in the UN. He also cited a number of areas of peacekeeping in need of reform such as addressing the bias of Western countries leading peacekeeping missions, seeking better burden sharing in peacekeeping forces away from poor countries and toward rich ones, and checking the European Union's (EU) effort to "regionalize peacekeeping" -- a notion the GOM opposes. When asked to square the GOM idea of opening a regional training center with its criticism of the EU, Bourita countered by citing Morocco's unique skills and experience, the cost effectiveness of training "locally," and the ability to train in Arabic and French. Bourita underscored his "train locally, deploy globally" point by saying that it is often politically difficult for countries, citing Morocco as an example, to deploy peacekeepers within the region that it resides.

¶5. (C) Bourita said that apart from the training center idea, Morocco was also reflecting on the possibility of expanding its peacekeeping operational capacity by increasing the overall size of its peacekeeping-trained forces. The GOM is considering training additional Moroccan forces in peacekeeping in order to establish a three-part troop rotation system, whereby one third of its peacekeeping forces could be deployed at any one time while two-thirds of its peacekeepers would be based domestically to rest, refit, and train. Although Bourita did not mention specific targets, with current overseas deployment figures, Morocco might be looking to establish a peacekeeping contingent of approximately 4,500 security personnel, putting it in the league of Nigeria and Ghana (currently the two largest peacekeeping contributors among Africa countries with over 5,200 and 3,200 personnel currently deployed to UN peacekeeping missions, respectively, according to UN figures). The MFA's expansion idea seems to be in line with Ref A reporting that we have seen indicating that Morocco may be willing to increase its peacekeeping force contribution to the DRC.

... But Many Constraints Exist

¶6. (C) Training, equipment shortfalls, and security requirements in the Western Sahara will likely constrain Morocco's vision of increased peacekeeping capacity. According to Chabi, the GOM would welcome U.S. assistance to meet these shortfalls. Specifically, the GOM would be interested in exploring any possibilities of U.S.-provided training for Moroccan soldiers, police, and diplomats in the areas of peacekeeping/building, preventative diplomacy, and post-conflict development. He also mentioned large lift capacity helicopters, e.g., Chinook-class, as a key operating constraint for Morocco. Complimenting U.S. efforts supporting resolution of the Sahara conflict, Chabi said that if the issue could be resolved, Morocco would contribute more troops to UN peacekeeping operations.

¶7. (C) GOM initiatives are also suffering from a lack of "buy-in" from the Moroccan armed forces. Despite the steady signals from MFA that the GOM is interested in at least preparing the diplomatic terrain for an increase in its peacekeeping posture, we have heard scant corroboration of this effort through GOM military channels. According to embassy military personnel, the Moroccan armed forces have not requested equipment or training in support of peacekeeping operations. Although a U.S. military police unit trained Moroccan personnel in PKO as part of the "African Lion" training exercise in June 2008, top level officers, including Armed Forces Commander General Abdelaziz Bennani and Army Operations Chief Colonel Abdelfatah, have not tabled this issue in discussions with embassy officers. Military Intelligence Chief and newly promoted Brigadier General Abdallah Hamdoun flatly denied any knowledge of the initiative when asked by embassy defense attaches in early July, suggesting a lack of MFA consultation with the military

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on this issue. (Comment: The military's lack of knowledge about the MFA's peacekeeping proposals is unsurprising given the palace's penchant for keeping the military at arms length from policy decision-making, stemming back to several failed military coup attempts in the early 70s. Consequently, the lack of "buy-in" from the military on the government's peacekeeping efforts is likely to delay implementation of any new initiatives. End Comment.)

¶8. (C) Another area of potential challenge for GOM peacekeeping initiatives are past allegations of Moroccan soldier sexual misconduct during peacekeeping deployments to the DRC in 2004 (Ref B) and Cote d'Ivoire in 2007 (Ref C). Moroccan soldiers have been identified to have engaged in soliciting prostitutes, fathering unwanted children, and in some cases, accused of rape. However, Morocco's rapid response to these events, through professional investigations and the meting out of punishments, is likely to ameliorate, if not fully reverse, concerns of Moroccan expansion of its peacekeeping activities.

... And Deployment to Sudan Unlikely

¶10. (C) Bourita told us that it would not consider contributing to a peacekeeping operation in Sudan at this time. Morocco considered the quality of the peacekeeping forces already committed there and their management by the African Union (AU) to be poor. Morocco was also uncomfortable with the command of the force being shared between the UN and the AU -- an international body from which Morocco withdrew in 1984. In addition, the GOM was not satisfied that there was agreement among the warring parties to invite a peacekeeping force into the country -- a point reiterated to us by Brigadier General Hamdoun in early July. Finally, the GOM was not comfortable with the rules of

engagement set for the current force in Sudan -- although he did not elaborate on what he meant by this.

¶11. (C) Speaking more broadly, Bourita told us that the GOM will only consider participating in a deployment if minimum criteria are met. Although not set in stone, he said that the below list of principles serves the MFA internally as a guideline when considering peacekeeping deployments. Bourita considered the first two, if not first three, of the criteria to be absent from the Sudan context.

-- (1) All parties to the conflict in a country must agree to host peacekeeping forces. Without political consensus on this point, a successful deployment is impossible.

-- (2) The peacekeeping deployment has a clear mandate from the UN via a UN Security Council Resolution.

-- (3) The nature of the peacekeeping operation and how it will be carried out must be established in detail before the deployment begins. One of the major strategic decisions in this regard is whether the operation will have a military or humanitarian component, or a combination of both.

-- (4) The territorial integrity of the state requesting the peacekeeping force must be respected.

¶12. (C) Comment: Morocco's exploration of its peacekeeping profile by hosting a UN center for training and/or by expanding its own capacity has multiple potential payoffs for Morocco and the U.S. The possibility of receiving funding, equipment, and training -- from foreign countries -- to further professionalize its armed forces presents the immediate potential payoff for the GOM. Morocco would undoubtedly parlay any increased peacekeeping capacity into winning favor with countries toward legitimizing its claims to Western Sahara. In the long run, it would also provide a new mission for forces in the Western Sahara should the impasse with the POLISARIO be overcome. For the U.S., the initiatives represent the prospect of increasing peacekeeping capacity world wide, further improve upon its bilateral relationship Morocco, and send a message of reward and recognition of Morocco's improvements in human rights and

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peace building in the region. After appropriate consultations with affected embassies and other actors, it might be productive for the Department to instruct Embassy Rabat to provide preliminary reflections to the GOM on its proposed peacekeeping initiatives. End Comment.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/rabat>

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